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## Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MITCH MCCONNELL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, keep us from being a nation that forgets You. Remind us that righteousness exalts any nation, but that sin deprives, degrades, and destroys, providing reproach to any people.

Arise, O God. Lift Your hands and lead our lawmakers to accomplish Your purposes. Use them to break the stranglehold of wickedness, providing deliverance for captives and freedom for the oppressed. In You, O God, we find refuge. May we not be brought to shame, for You can make even our enemies be at peace with us. Continue to guide us, strong Deliverer, for we are pilgrims in this land. We are weak, but You are mighty. Guide us with Your powerful hands.

Lord, we praise You for the courage of the South Carolina Legislature.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, July 9, 2015.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MITCH MCCONNELL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,  
*President pro tempore.*

Mr. MCCONNELL thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALEXANDER). The majority leader is recognized.

### EVERY CHILD ACHIEVES ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, No Child Left Behind laid the groundwork for important reforms to our education system. But with its authorization expiring in 2007, and with the previous Senate majority failing to replace it with a serious proposal, many of the original requirements stayed in place anyway and gradually became unworkable.

This resulted in a lot of States getting tangled up in endless bureaucracy, reducing their ability to focus on boosting achievement and school performance. That was certainly true in the Commonwealth I represent. Kentucky was actually the first State to petition for some freedom from the law's requirements, and with that additional flexibility came better results.

Kentucky improved its graduation rate, climbing into the top 10 among all States. Kentucky increased the number of students who met statewide standards. Kentucky raised the percentage of students entering postsecondary education programs, increasing that number from about half to more than 68 percent in just a few years' time.

So this additional flexibility has been good for Kentucky but only to a point, because the White House began to tack on more and more requirements as a condition of continued relief from the original law's mandates, leaving many States in an untenable situation. This is how the White House was able to impose Common Core in many places that didn't necessarily want it. In a sense, the flexibility one hand gave, the other has continually taken away.

It is clear that temporary relief, strapped with other Federal mandates, is not a workable choice for States. This is why we need congressional action to replace the broken husks that remain of No Child Left Behind with reforms that build on the good ideas in the original law while doing away with the bad ones.

That is what the bipartisan Every Child Achieves Act before us would, in fact, achieve. It would grow the kind of flexibility we have seen work so well in States such as Kentucky, and it would stop Federal bureaucrats from imposing the kind of top-down, one-size-fits-all requirements that we all know threaten that progress.

Kentucky has already seen success with the limited and conditional flexibility granted to it so far. So just imagine what States such as Kentucky could achieve when fully empowered to do what is right for their students. This is how Kentucky education commissioner Terry Holliday put it in a letter he sent in support of this bill:

I can attest based on our experience that the waiver process is onerous and allows too many opportunities for federal intrusion into state responsibility for education. The long-term health of public education in the United States requires reauthorization and an end to the use of the waiver as a patch on an otherwise impractical system of requirements.

He is, of course, just right, and we have never been closer to achieving the kind of outcome our kids deserve. Many thought Washington could never

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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